

One issue with IBOC DAB that has not received much discussion is the quality, or lack thereof, of the digital audio it would provide. At the bit rates iBiquity is planning (at last check, 36 kbps for AM and 96 kbps for FM), the audio quality is likely to be intolerably poor for many people to listen to. XM satellite radio is using 64 kbps and they were very quick to stop using the phrase "CD Quality" after so many people complained about the inferior sound.

"Lossy" digital audio compression, such as used by IBOC and XM, is also further degraded when it is combined with another form of lossy compression, such as is already popular with radio stations to store music on computer systems or on satellite delivered programming. Combinations of multiple instances of lossy compression like this results in a cumulative drop in quality that can be compared to making a photocopy of a page that is already a photocopy itself. And unfortunately, radio listeners are already hearing this on the existing analog AM and FM bands -- I hate to point fingers, but tune to 99.9 WODE-FM in Easton, PA for a prime example of this.

Even if no other technical concerns existed, IBOC is still going to need much more extensive testing of their digital audio, from both casual listeners and from quality-conscious "audiophiles". Then it will surely be apparent that any digital audio service at the bit-rates IBOC is planning is going to be simple incapable of providing anywhere near the claimed "FM-quality" or "CD-quality" audio.

Sincerely,

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